

Submitter: Joseph Stenger
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1543

We need safe, reliable and well-maintained roads and bridges. We need SB 1542 and SB 1543 to help get us to that goal. These provide best-practices based on what has worked in other states.

My name is Joseph Stenger MD. I am Co-Chair of the Transportation Team of MCAT, Mobilizing Climate Action Together. I primarily depend on cycling for my local travel and I see infrastructure damage and inadequate safety features everywhere I ride. We must do better!

Measure What We Drive, SB 1542, will result in setting clear goals regarding maintenance, safety and emissions. New projects will be scored according to how much they will contribute to those goals, then prioritized accordingly for funding to get us the most benefit for each dollar spent. If we are not progressing well enough toward a goal, then that goal will get more weight in the next round of funding. All of this will be clearly available in a dashboard so that we can see what we are getting for our tax dollars.

SB 1542 is needed because we have seen scarce transportation funding directed to massive projects like the I-5 Rose Quarter and the IBR, where cost overruns and huge payments to consultants are common. Yet much-needed maintenance and safety work get short-changed, impairing our roads and bridges and resulting in crashes, slow response times, bridge weight restrictions and detours. Municipal transportation managers have testified to you that the number of jobs on their deferred maintenance lists steadily grows. When such maintenance is delayed, the costs to bring facilities back to good status are much higher. When taxpayers don't see expected upkeep in their local areas, they lose faith that government is choosing projects wisely.

Guardrails for Good Governance, SB 1543, would direct creation of Oregon's first transportation-specific debt management system. This means that decision-makers and the public would have accurate information on the timing, risks, and benefits of using bonds to finance projects. It would also facilitate public engagement in proceedings of the Oregon Transportation Commission.

SB 1543 is needed because the cost of paying off prior debt has risen so much more than revenues that it constrains expenditures on urgently needed maintenance and safety work. Prior legislative directives have pushed OTC to approve projects that add debt, while underfunding basic needs. Guardrails for Good Governance

establishes strict oversight to improve how the agency manages its debt, budget, and projects.

These two bills complement each other. I urge you to vote for both bills and to influence your colleagues to do so as well.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregonians!

Joseph Stenger MD